



Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan

5/31 Master Plan Advisory Team Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 31st, 2017; 5:30 pm

The first meeting of the Ellicott City Master Plan Advisory Team was held on Wednesday, May 31st, 2017 in the Columbia/Ellicott City Room located at 3430 Court House Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043.

Master Plan consultants present: Tom McGilloway, Matt Thomason, Jeff Dube, Lisa Wingate, Megan Griffith, John D'Epagnier, Kelly Gutshall, Steve Brigham

Staff present: Valdis Lazdins (Planning and Zoning), Phil Nichols (County Administration), Kate Bolinger (Planning and Zoning), Amy Gowan (Planning and Zoning), Mark DeLuca (Public Works), Karitsa Norman (Planning and Zoning)

Members present: Allan Shad, Ed Lilley, Gary Maule, Beth Woodruff, Rob Brennan, Debbie Slack Katz, Karen Besson, Ben Barlow, Len Berkowitz, Jean Sedlacko

Members absent: Don Reuwer

Steve Brigham, Public Engagement Associates, opened the meeting at 5:30 pm and thanked everyone for coming.

Valdis Lazdins, Director of the Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ), thanked everyone for participating. He acknowledged that it has taken time to get the master plan started, but the timing has been deliberate so the master plan can benefit from the findings of the Hydrology and Hydraulic Study. Mr. Lazdins described the nationwide search DPZ undertook to select the master plan consulting team, and how DPZ was fortunate to find a great team from nearby Baltimore. He talked about his prior work experience with a few members of the team and said he was impressed with their work in flood impacted communities.

Tom McGilloway, Mahan Rykiel Associates, stated that he would serve as the project manager for the master plan. He spoke of his background growing up in Catonsville, gave a brief overview of his work, and introduced the other members of the consulting team.

Mr. Brigham outlined the agenda for the evening and asked Kate Bolinger, community planner with DPZ, to describe the contents of binders presented to each MPAT member. Ms. Bolinger called attention to

the Executive Order that created the group, which described the purpose of the MPAT: to provide a local understanding, to act as a sounding board for the consultant team, and to be a liaison with the community.

Mr. Brigham then asked each MPAT member to describe their greatest hope for the master plan (and process) and the most important issue for the master plan (and process).

In general, members expressed **hopes** that the plan (and process) will:

- take advantage of a disaster to establish a plan for Ellicott City for the future;
- get regional buy-in for the plan;
- be effectively implemented;
- bring out the historic richness of the community while keeping it a livable community;
- bring people together rather than dividing;
- optimize existing assets;
- make Ellicott city sustainable in its broadest sense;
- offer real viable solutions to Ellicott City's problems;
- be fiscally achievable and backed by long-term county budgets;
- get the whole watershed community to consider the impact they have on downtown; and
- satisfy a continued desire for people to be here and be part of this great community.

The team felt that the **most important issues** for the plan and process are:

- safety and a sense of security that an event like the July 30th, 2016 flood won't happen again;
- integration of the residential community with business and historic preservation needs so that the city can be resilient whenever anything happens again (history has proven that EC floods);
- courage to implement;
- defining Ellicott City;
- the fact that the uniqueness and difference of EC is what makes it so special;
- greater unity among all factions in town; and
- making the whole area more walkable (more people, less traffic).

Mr. McGilloway thanked everyone for their input on hopes and issues and noted how helpful the information would be to the master plan consultant team. He then described major milestones in the master plan schedule to occur in July, September, November, January, March and May. He said the next major milestone is the week of July 10, during which a series of stakeholder meetings and a public workshop would be held. He noted the MPAT would meet early in that week to have more in-depth discussion, provide guidance as the consultants meet with other stakeholders, and review the presentation for the public workshop.

Mr. McGilloway stated that in September, there would be a pop-up engagement event, potentially at the Main Street Music Fest. He said there would be a public workshop in November focused on developing options and opportunities (building from the Community Advisory Group report, the

Hydrology and Hydraulic Study, and other past studies and plans). He indicated that McCormick Taylor, author of the Hydrology and Hydraulic Study, would be retained to run scenarios through their two-dimensional model as necessary and the MPAT would provide feedback on scenarios before the public workshop. In January and March, the MPAT would meet to review and offer feedback on the draft plan before it is presented to the public. Between March and May, the team will finalize the plan. The team, especially sub-consultant Arnett Muldrow, will focus on branding, drawing upon the distinctive identity of Ellicott City. MPAT members asked whether there will be a stand-alone promotional component produced as part of the final product. Mr. McGilloway confirmed that a promotional component would be a key aspect and cited other instances.

Mr. Brigham then outlined the role of the Master Plan Advisory Team. In general, MPAT will be a sounding board. He said members should be active participants, attending as many public meetings as possible, and offer advice along the way. He stressed the important role MPAT members will play as liaison to the community: informing residents, business owners and others of the plan's public meetings and making them a part of the process.

Mr. Brigham indicated the MPAT meetings will be led by DPZ and Mahan Rykiel. PEA will facilitate. The public can attend and observe, but the public participates at public workshops, not at MPAT meetings. Meeting dates will be announced well ahead of time so that all members can attend, and materials will be provided to give adequate time to prepare.

Mr. Brigham noted these kinds of teams work well if members: display a willingness to share but also to listen; are open and honest; are creative and strategic; keep distractions to a minimum; are succinct and use time wisely; and come to each meeting with a sense of humor and lightness.

Mr. Brigham asked if there are any other guidelines people would like to suggest. MPAT members requested resources to aid the discussion, specifically requesting maps for the room. They further suggested that there can be no wrong answers and everyone's opinions are worthwhile because everyone in the room wants the plan to be successful. They stated that MPAT members should remember that these meetings are public and minutes will be shared. Finally, they suggested that there be sensitivity to other viewpoints.

Ms. Bolinger closed the meeting and reminded members that they will be asked to provide information to their communities and encourage participation in future public workshops. She emphasized that, particularly for the next series of meetings in July, the business community will need to be involved.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.